

Home canning and brewing bill introduced

By SEN. DEE BROWN | Posted: Monday, January 14, 2013 2:00 pm

This week, Senate Bill 94 will have a hearing in the Senate Agriculture Committee. It will allow high acid foods and dried fruits and vegetables to be exchanged with others on a free will basis. I have also included home brew in the bill since this growing hobby has become quite popular statewide.

In modern times, food preservation is not a necessity for most of us. People who preserve their food usually have a garden, enjoy the fresh taste of something nurtured by their own hands and especially enjoy sharing their bounty with family and friends.

A year ago, there was much excitement by home canners to have an exchange in Whitefish at the brewery. When we showed up on the appointed night, we were disappointed to find that it had been canceled because of health department concerns.

Food preservation has been part of our earliest history. Dried fruits and vegetables have been found in Egyptian tombs dating back thousands of years. American Indians made pemmican and dried buffalo meat to sustain them through their nomadic lives. The beans found in buried earthenware from the Anasazi Indians of Colorado have become a huge favorite in modern times.

This type of bill can encourage a festival similar to ones held around the country, which brings like-minded people together to exchange their food and recipes. The Flathead is a perfect place to begin one, and SB94 will be the springboard for this type of festival without the "pickle police" looking over our shoulders.

Last week's swearing-in ceremonies in the House and Senate were inside each chamber with family and friends in attendance. State officials had theirs outside the capitol building near the front steps. There was a nip in the air, but the ceremony was memorable.

Two fighter jets flew over the crowd as Gov. Steve Bullock was sworn in, along with cavalry cannons blasting afterward. Sen. Max Baucus was home from D.C. to witness the event and later spoke to a joint session while he was in town.

I have met with Gov. Bullock's economic advisor, John Rogers, and discussed the Calgary economic development center. It sounds like the governor and Rogers both recognize the viability of more trade with our northern neighbors. I intend to work with his office to come up with a solution which will put more Montanans to work and allow our trade to expand.

Please feel free to visit Helena, testify at committee hearings, visit with your legislators and stay in touch via the Internet. You can look up all the session's information and view many committee meetings on the state's Web site at www.leg.mt.gov or Google "Montana Legislature."